

E
233
.D41

The Burgoyne campaign.

July - October 1777.

LITERARY
COUNCIL
OF
CONGRESS



Class E233
Book D41

7 D41

T H E

BURGOYNE CAMPAIGN,

O F

JULY-OCTOBER, 1777.

B Y

J. WATTS DE PEYSTER,

BREVET MAJOR-GENERAL S.N.Y.

REPRINTED FROM "THE UNITED SERVICE," OCTOBER, 1883.

7
6
5
4
3
2
1

PHILADELPHIA:

L. R. HAMERSLY & CO.

1883.

E 233

. II 41

34

THE BURGOYNE CAMPAIGN, JULY-OCTOBER, 1777.

"Qui n'avance pas, récule!"—MICHELET.
"Whoever ceases to advance, loses ground."

THE result of about forty years' critical examination of history has led, step by step, to the inevitable conclusion that if "history is philosophy" or experience "teaching by examples," very little is generally known, if at all clearly developed, of the methods by which the great problems of human progress have been solved. A recent writer of ability—or so considered, it is to be supposed, because he is so extensively quoted—observes, "The philosophy of history undervalues the work of individual persons. It attributes political and spiritual changes to invisible forces operating in the heart of society, regarding the human actors as no more than ciphers." He is right. Individuals *are* undervalued. God operates and achieves miracles through individuals, justifying the remark that genius is the manifestation of the direct action of God, Deity, upon men through a man.

The great difficulty in arriving at a correct judgment lies in the fact that merit in this world is gauged by success, whereas the greatest merit has, as the rule, been a failure so far as contemporaneous recognition and reward is concerned. Some of the men who have exercised the greatest influence on human progress perished of misery or by fire, and their mutilated or charred corpses served, simply, as steps for some audacious charlatan to mount to celebrity and fortune.¹

¹ The examples of unrewarded merit in all ages are not only multitudinous, but exquisitely painful to contemplate and record. For instance, consider the following:

"The history of the recovery of the *Iranian* alphabet and literature forms a chapter of almost romantic interest in the arid annals of philology. In the middle of the last century a portion of the Avesta was attached by an iron chain to a wall of the Bodleian, and was regarded as a mysterious treasure of which the key was lost. Fired with the ambition of unlocking the secret of Zoroaster, Anquetil Duperron, then a mere lad studying in Paris, enlisted as a common soldier with the object of reaching India. Landing at Pondicherry, he mastered Persian and Sanskrit, and thus equipped for his enterprise, he succeeded after years of hardship and adventures in reaching Surat, the goal of his hopes, where, worming himself into the confidence of the Paris priests, he obtained from them the key to their ancient alphabet and language, and copies of their sacred books, hitherto guarded with the utmost jeal-

intended for the statue of Schuyler would not be vacant for an hour, because the descendant of every Whig New Yorker, man, woman, and child, who profited by Schuyler's address and determination would flock to contribute to place the grandest effigy of the real hero of Saratoga, Philip Schuyler, in its appropriate station.

There is another aspect under which Schuyler must be considered.

Just as the Consul Varro, after the catastrophe of Cannæ, just so Schuyler after the fall of Ticonderoga and defeats following, almost equivalent in their effect at the time to the catastrophe on the Aufidus, the American General like the Roman Consul—"did not despair of the republic." No parity of circumstances, in regard to the peril from Burgoyne, existed after Gates arrived, as there was before. The charm of British and Hessian invincibility had been completely dispelled. Burgoyne had displayed himself in his true character—inertion.

To the west, Fort Stanwix; to the east, Hoosic—misnamed Bennington—had occurred before Gates appeared. The fact was now patent that Americans might conquer. The preparations for defense were complete. The tide was on the turn and Schuyler about to place his foot within the threshold of the Temple of Immortality (as Washington—to whom alone he was second—had done the previous winter) when Fate arrested his ascent and thrust him aside and down, pushing forward into his place Gates, who possessed as few attributes of a grand leader and soldier as any who figured in any important position in the Continental Armies.

The writer's race have reason to withhold such applause from Schuyler, but it must be given, for it is Truth. If the Revolution was justifiable, which many think it was not, Schuyler is entitled to a position next to Washington in the regards of the American people, certainly of those of the State of New York.

* * * * *

When Horatio Gates, the hero of an intrigue, met Burgoyne to receive his surrender, he uttered a compliment which may have been the pink of politeness, but was entirely without truth. He said, "I shall always be ready to testify that it [the surrender] has not been through any fault of your Excellency." To admit that the failure of Burgoyne was no fault of that general individually was a flattery too gross to be admissible, except from one who, if not permeated with self-conceit, must have appreciated how little he had to do with the success which sealed his opponent's fate.

Now let us go into a concise consideration of the events of this campaign, and in the first place let any one truly interested in the subject seek to discover why Burgoyne became so prominent.

If any officer living deserved the place conceded to Burgoyne it was Carleton. He alone had saved Canada in 1775–76. He possessed every qualification which was necessary to the operations of 1777, in

all of which Burgoyne was deficient. With very small means he had accomplished very great results. To talk about bravery or courage as the grandest quality of a general is folly. Bulls are brave, but the skill of the matador laughs brute bravery to scorn. A bull-dog is brave, but he is very easily disposed of by common-sense dexterity. Bravery without discretion in a general almost realizes the words of the proverb about a woman and a jewel in the unclean animal's nose. A general to be great must resemble a chain of large and little links; some extremely great and some extremely small. In many cases the lack of one of the most diminutive of the links is as fatal as the rupture or absence of one of the greatest. Burgoyne's chain was one destitute of many links of different sizes, each, however, indispensable to military success.

His campaign was a tissue of blunders almost unredeemed by a single creditable stroke due to his own generalship.

To begin. He took Ticonderoga. The excessive value set upon this position, in, upon, around, and against which so many millions had been wasted by France and England and the Colonies, was one of the popular errors of the day. The estimate set on it was like that of Halleck in regard to Harper's Ferry, a delusion and a snare. Its possession decided nothing, because "the valley of decision" was not there. This was shown in 1755 and 1759. The Bible contains more common-sense truths in concrete language than almost all the rest of the books together. "Awake, O sword, smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." Quebec was the shepherd for the French in Canada. Wolfe took it (Quebec), and the fall of its dependencies was simply a question of time. Ticonderoga was relinquished immediately when menaced by Amherst.

[Quebec was invested in the latter part of June, 1759, by Wolfe; Fort Niagara fell 24th July, Ticonderoga, 27th (30th?), and Crown Point, 1st August. The great battle on the Plains of Abraham took place 23d September, 1759, where literally a single volley at thirty or forty yards blew the French dominion and military prestige in America to the winds forever.]

Another piece of physical and mental blindness! If Ticonderoga was the key to Lake Champlain, Sugar [Loaf] Hill, eight hundred feet high, or Mount Defiance—not Mount Hope,²—as General Phillips

² To demonstrate how little trustworthy ordinary histories are, consider the conflicting statements in regard to "Mount Hope" and "Mount Defiance." Lossing (F. B. A. R., i. 184, 2, 3) says Frazer gave to the former,—about nine hundred and nine yards northwest of latter,—4th July, 1777, the title it bears. Stone says it was so named by Abercrombie in 1756. Trumbull (26th June, 1776) calls the elevation "Mount Hope," and also alludes to "Mount Defiance," writing of a year before Frazer or Phillips saw them, although Carrington (B. A. R., 308) states that General Phillips promptly occupied the hill, giving it the name of "Mount Hope;" and again (309), by the morning of 5th July, a British force crowned the summit of Sugar Loaf

named it—was the key to Ticonderoga. Phillips, Burgoyne's chief of artillery, saw this at a glance. They say that American officers had previously discovered the truth of this, understood the danger, and knew that guns could be got up on the height. Their advice was treated very much in the same way as the counsels of Captain Dugald Dalgetty to Sir Duncan Campbell, as to the necessity of a "sconce" on an elevation which commanded his castle of Ardenvohr. Some thirty years ago the writer was visiting a foreign fortress upon which very large amounts had been expended, and being acquainted with the range of American Columbiads or Bomfords, pointed out two heights to which such heavy pieces could easily be hoisted, which would render the works, below, untenable in a few hours. The general, "a mighty man of valor," first questioned the range of the guns. When this was shown to be uncontested, he was so much annoyed he would not listen to another word on the subject, stating that the government had spent so much in rendering the place as they thought impregnable, they would appropriate no more even to rectify an engineering error. A subsequent visit to the same spot showed that the commanding positions were still unoccupied, and the place at the mercy of an enemy that could get possession of them, so that the money squandered on the defenses had been lavished in vain. The neglect of Gage to fortify Dorchester Heights, and the occupation of them by Thomas, compelled the British to evacuate Boston, and, just so, when Phillips got his guns upon Sugar [Loaf] Hill, 4th July, 1777, the Americans had to abandon Ticonderoga incontinently.

This operation of John Thomas, M.D., Major-General Continental Army, was very much like the capture of Fort Eguilette upon the advice of Napoleon Bonaparte, 17th December, 1793. Thomas was an officer of great promise, and evinced more real military comprehension than almost any other of the Whig commanders at the time.

Hill, which was promptly dignified by its occupants with the name of "Fort Defiance." Burgoyne, in "A State of the Expedition," Appendix XX., mentioned "Mount Hope" as a well-known title, taken possession of by Frazer, 3d July, and the occupation of "Sugar Hill" upon the recommendation of Lieutenant Twiss, "the commanding engineer" (XXI.), but says nothing about naming it "'Fort' or Mount Defiance." W. L. Stone, in his "Burgoyne Campaign" (16), says, "Frazer named Mount Hope," but mentioned nothing about Phillips giving the title to "Mount Defiance." These are matters of little importance (*mere distentions of words*). No one recognized that "Mount Defiance" was the key to Ticonderoga and *made it a fact* until Lieutenant Twiss demonstrated it out to General Phillips, and between them they made it THE FATAL FACT. And yet Colonel Trumbull (30-32) pointed out in June, 1776, that it could be occupied, "since it was obvious to all that there could be no difficulty in driving up a loaded carriage." Except in the case of Schuyler, a study of this campaign of 1777 reminds the critic of what Frederic the Great said about the operations of the Turks and the Russians, "That it was the one-eyed fighting the blind." Still, except in rare cases, is not this remark applicable to most wars? It certainly applied to many campaigns of the war to put down the "Slaveholders' Rebellion."

Popular delusion ascribes to Washington the credit due to pretty much everybody else,—as, for instance, the perception of the importance of Dorchester Heights,—but closer critics ascribe the whole merit of the conception and execution to John Thomas.

Now let us look at the time-table, or “Itinerary of General Burgoyne.” He was master of Ticonderoga on the 6th July, and of the Lake next day. On the same date Frazer routed the Americans at Hubbardtown. According to Gordon, New England regiments behaved so outrageously that St. Clair “had to dismiss them from the army with disgrace.” On the 12th July, St. Clair joined Schuyler at Fort Edward, sixteen miles from Skenesborough, now Whitehall, and on the 18th there were not over four thousand four hundred regulars and militia present. On the 27th, Schuyler had only two thousand seven hundred Continental troops and less than fifteen hundred militia. At this time Burgoyne had seven thousand effectives, rank and file, A 1, first class, besides Provincials and Indians flushed with victory and with success of every kind.

Of Schuyler’s regulars, one-third were negroes, boys, and men too aged for field, or indeed any other service; in a manner naked, without blankets, ill armed, and very deficient in accoutrements. “Too many of our officers,” wrote Schuyler, “would be a disgrace to the most contemptible troops that were ever collected; and had so little sense of honor that cashiering them seems no punishment. They have stood by and suffered the most scandalous depredations to be committed on the poor, distressed, ruined, and flying inhabitants.” He had also about fifteen hundred militia.

George III. was not only an excellent king, with the very best of characters, as the astute Franklin admitted, but a monarch endowed with the highest kind of common sense. He advised Burgoyne, after he had captured Ticonderoga, to cross over to Lake George, ascend that sheet of water, resume the march at Fort William Henry, or rather Fort George, and follow the excellent old military road (*strada buonissima*, says the Italian Castiglione, i. 161) to Fort Edward. Phillips took his route with the heavier *impedimenta* (Carrington, 313).

Let us see what Gordon says to this route:

“Had the British commander returned from Whitehall immediately to Ty, and advanced from thence in the most expeditious manner, with a few light field-pieces, instead of suffering any delay, in order to his dragging along with him a heavy train of artillery, he might have been at Albany by the time he got to Hudson’s River [30th July]. Your correspondent, the fifth of October, the last year breakfasted with General Gates at Ty; sailed in company up Lake George (about thirty-five miles long), with their horses in batteaus, landed, stayed awhile, and reached Fort Edward (about nine miles from Fort George) at night a little after eight. From Ty to Lake George is rather more

than two miles. The two small schooners on the lake could have made no long resistance against a brigade of gunboats. Fort George was well adapted to keep off Indians and small parties: but not to stop the royal army. The Americans there, instead of defending the fort, or opposing the landing of the army, would undoubtedly have retreated, to General Schuyler at Fort Edward."

If ordinary travelers could breakfast at Ticonderoga, with their horses ascend Lake George in bateaux, and sup at 8 P.M. of the same day at Fort Edward on the Hudson, an army of ten thousand men as well equipped and supplied as that of Burgoyne could have been re-assembled at old Ty by the 10th July; could have been transported to Fort George³ by the 12th, and having left their heavy guns and all but their light artillery and indispensable materials there or at Ty, in depot, with a sufficient guard, could have reached Fort Edward on the evening of the 13th July. From this point to Albany is about fifty miles. With six to ten days' rations and an extra supply of ammunition sufficient for a battle of that period, Burgoyne could have swept Schuyler out of his path with ease, and, allowing one day's delay for a fight, could have occupied Albany on the 16th July, even conceding that he lost several days, which would not have been necessary, because as yet the country was full of food of every kind. At Ticonderoga enough provisions of all sorts were captured to furnish rations for Burgoyne's army for a month, and at Skenesborough (White-

³ FORTS WILLIAM HENRY AND GEORGE.—These forts have been so often confounded that a few words of explanation may be necessary to make the matter clear. Exactly at the upper or southern extremity of Lake George is the station and dock of the "Lake George Branch" of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Railroad," which "Branch" follows, as a rule, the stage-route which preceded it just as the latter about succeeded the excellent "old military road" constructed as early as the first French wars. To the west of the station and to the south of the present magnificent "Lake House" are the vestiges of Fort William Henry, which was constructed by Sir William Johnson after his victory in 1755; destroyed in 1757 at the time of the massacre permitted by Montcalm,—a catastrophe which Webb at Fort Edward could have prevented had he not pusillanimously refused to march to the relief of Fort William Henry. Only a year or two ago skeletons, balls, fragments of shell, etc., were dug out of one of the mounds which originally constituted a portion of the *enciente*. Directly to the south-by-east of it, beyond a little trout-brook called West Creek, which twists into the lake, and not as much as a mile away, are the ruins of Fort George, and a little south of that again stood a small work called Fort Gage,—of this scarcely a vestige is discernible,—named after the general who commanded at Boston when the Revolution broke out, and until forced to evacuate the place. In 1755, General William Johnson won the first decided victory over the French at this point, and for it was made a Baronet. His son, Sir John, the victor of Oriskany, although only a stripling of thirteen years, was with his father, and behaved remarkably well. The monument commemorating the fall of Colonel Williams is visible on an elevation to the west, from the railroad which passes close by Bloody Pond, into which the bodies of those who fell with that officer were thrown. Every inch of the country for several miles south of the Lake House is historic ground and ought to be fertile, it has been so often drenched with blood and fattened with corpses.

hall) large quantities of food and the means of preparing it were wantonly destroyed, it might be said, through sheer stupidity, by the victors completing the work of the vanquished, a destruction which it was the former's interest to prevent and arrest.

Meanwhile, at the very time when the British troops stood most in need of necessities,—19th August,—when Burgoyne was at the Duer House (Fort Miller), what does Lieutenant Hadden's Journal reveal?—that at this moment the General commanding was profiting by the very transportation which he complains of as being so deficient, to bring forward his own comforts to the extent of thirty wagons. From the Burgoyne "Orderly-Book" the document is missing which this Journal of Hadden supplies, and that voucher, evidently torn out, is reproduced by General Horatio Rogers. "Major-General Phillips" (reads the missing Order of the 19th) "*has heard with the utmost astonishment that notwithstanding his most serious and positive orders of the 16th instant, that no carts were to be used for any purpose whatever but the transport of provisions, unless by particular orders from the Commander-in-chief, as expressed in the order, there are this day above thirty carts on the road laden with baggage, said to be their Lieutenant-General's.*"

Are any comments necessary in connection with Lossing's intimations, most cruel but criminal if true (F. B. A. R., i. 44.)? Madame Riedesel's language, as well as that of the "Brunswick Journal" (W. L. S.'s "Burgoyne Campaign," 87, 88), and of Fonblanque's admissions and explanations,—"*qui s'excuse s'accuse,*"—what judgment is too severe? Let critics who would condemn this view examine and compare these and other authorities, and declare if this article does not arrive at a righteous judgment. Think of how many thousands lost their all and expiated their loyalty and paid the "last full measure of devotion," by exile, ruin, or death, through the selfishness and soldierly shortcomings of the man to whom at the crisis of two worlds the interests of a great nation were confided!

Moreover, if Burgoyne had pushed on to Albany forthwith, the Americans would not have dared to defend the Mohawk Valley, because it is universally acknowledged that "the Burgoyne scare was upon the whole country."

Consequently there would have been no attempt made at a defense of Fort Stanwix, and by the 5th August, St. Leger, Sir John Johnson, and Brandt would have been up with their Regulars, Rangers, and Indians; and the Loyalists or Tories would have rushed to arms by thousands. Sir William Howe did not sail from New York for the Chesapeake until the 23d July; and thus, between them, the British generals would have been masters of the situation. The New England Colonies would thus have been severed from the Middle and Southern, according to the plan of the great German strategist and tac-

tician, Von Bulow, and other military experts; the French would not have entered into an alliance with the revolted but defeated and splintered Colonies, much less the Spaniards; and the game of Independence would have been up.

It is perfectly well known that if Clive, the conqueror of India, had been alive, he would have been the British Commander-in-chief in America at this crisis, and he was not the man to let the grass grow under his feet, as did Gage, Howe, and Clinton; in fact, all except Cornwallis. Clive was energy, ability, constancy, courage incarnate, and his campaigns in India are prodigies to show what manhood can inspire and effect. Nicholson, who fell at Delhi in 1857, was a man of Clive's type; and R. Bosworth Smith, in his "Life of Lord Lawrence," quotes the following letter :

"Pray only reflect on the whole history of India. Where have we failed when we acted vigorously? Where have we succeeded when guided by timid counsels? Clive with twelve hundred men fought at Plassey, in opposition to the advice of his leading officers, beat forty thousand men, and conquered Bengal. Monson retreated from the Chumbul, and before he gained Agra his army was disorganized, and partially annihilated. Look at the Cabul catastrophe. It might have been averted by resolute and bold action. . . . The Punjab Irregulars are marching down in the highest spirits, proud to be trusted, and, eager to show their superiority over the regular troops, ready to fight shoulder to shoulder with the Europeans. But if, on their arrival, they find the Europeans behind breastworks, they will begin to think that the game is up."

How troops can march when excited by victory or incited by an intrepid leader worthy to lead brave men, remember Blucher's orders, example, and achievements from the Katzbach—on through so many terrible months, 1813–15—to Waterloo; Crawford's hastening the light division eighty miles in about thirty hours (Cust, ii. 2, 272–73) to Talavera, 1809; Sherman hurrying from Chattanooga to relieve Knoxville in 1863; the pursuit of Lee from Petersburg to Appomattox Court-House in 1865, and a thousand other examples, throughout all time, of the triumphs of military celerity. Marshal Count Saxe, high authority, said that a victorious army could hunt a routed army, such as was the American on the Hudson, in July, 1777, by rattling peas in bladders. It is well known that the sound of the Prussian drum, beaten by a tired-out boy, held up on horseback, kept the French flying after Waterloo. It is not necessary, however, to go out of the American lines to find an example of prompt and quick marching. In October, 1777, buoyant in spirit with the results of Freeman's Farm and Bemis' Heights, the news that the English were coming up the Hudson found the Americans in far different heart than when the same enemy had been advancing down the river two months previous. The marching of two New Hampshire regiments, ordered off towards Albany, shows what could have been done by the British if they had been imbued with a like energy and enthusiasm.

As a perfect parallel, or rather contrast, to Burgoyne's neglect of opportunities and Humphreys's employment or utilization of them, consider what the latter actually accomplished—3d–9th April, 1865. Humphreys had the Second (or, more properly, combined Second and Third) Corps; of these the Third Division, not over five thousand effective men, comprised all that remained of “the old fighting Third Corps, as we understand it.” The combined Second and Third Corps started out in pursuit of Lee, Monday, 2d–3d April, building bridges and roads, without which labors the columns could neither have advanced nor the supplies have been brought forward. On the 5th, this corps had reached Jetersville, and on the 6th, Humphreys discovered Lee retreating hurriedly, and at once started, view-halloo, in pursuit.

His troops were on the move from 6 A.M. till dark, advancing and fighting over fourteen miles in line of battle. By night they had been victorious in six engagements, the second a hard fight, the sixth and last a “heavy battle.” These are facts, if maps and reports and dispatches are worth anything as proofs. On the 7th, the combined Second and Third Corps started between starlight and sunrise (5.32 A.M.), went directly for the enemy, struck him, first, at High Bridge, and, afterwards, at Cumberland Church, upon the Heights of Farmville, and fought him at both places unassisted, and did all the fighting of any account—and some very hard fighting—of this day. On the 8th, Humphreys marched about twenty-five miles from Cumberland Church, the scene of the last pitched battle of the “Army of the Potomac” and the “Army of Northern Virginia,” and would have marched on more if his supply-train had been brought forward in time. His leading troops did not go into camp till midnight, and some of them did not reach their halting-place until 4 A.M. of the 9th.

On the 9th, by 12 M. Humphreys was “bunk up” against Lee's rear, or east front, under Longstreet, “and was only prevented from almost annihilating this force by the truce.” About 4 P.M. he received assurance that Lee had surrendered.

To recapitulate, from Petersburg to Appomattox Court-House is about one hundred miles, and all the marching and teaming had to be done on Virginian roads, which in bad weather are almost bottomless. From Ticonderoga to Washington is about the same distance, one hundred miles. Between seventy and eighty of these an army can enjoy facilities of water transport. So far as mere distance was concerned, Burgoyne and Humphreys were on a par; as to the fighting during the advance, Humphreys overcame ten times more severe work and perils than those which the British commander could possibly have had to encounter. No comparison can be instituted as to the armies under Schuyler and Gates and that under Lee. The former were prin-

cipally militia, the latter veterans, just as good as troops can be made or the world has seen.⁴

When people undertake to judge Burgoyne, do not allow them to bring forward the eulogistic or excusatory volumes of Englishmen, written to make the best of a bad case, or of Americans, equally anxious to make their own triumph the more glorious by exalting the character and doings of a chief over whom the victory was won. Instead of those obsolete narratives produced by unmilitary people and

⁴ Having submitted my views of Burgoyne's want of go and push to one of our generals most distinguished for pluck, dash, tenacity,—in fact, ALL the qualities which enter into the composition of a "real captain," *i.e.*, soldier and general,—the following is his reply, 30th July, 1883:

"The body of troops you mention, ten thousand men with thirty guns, with ammunition, subsistence and ambulance trains and medical wagons, such as are essential in our wooded and sparsely-settled country, should not, at the very most, stretch out a greater distance than what you mention: that is, five miles, and might be limited to three. The roads are supposed to be as you say, ordinarily good country roads. They could easily get over eighteen miles a day. In pursuit from Petersburg to Appomattox Court-House, which distance you put about one hundred miles (which is sufficiently correct), we [combined Second and Third Corps] were delayed the first day out (the 3d April) materially by the necessity of bridging streams that were not fordable. On the 4th I made but a short march owing to the cav[alry] coming in on the road and having precedence; my troops were put to working on the roads while the cavalry stopped us, to insure the trains following. We had but very few wagons with us: only some ammunition, ambulance, and surgical wagons.

"I fought over fourteen miles on the 6th of April, having marched four miles at least before coming in contact with the enemy. Then to cross Flat Creek, built two bridges over it, and repaired the road-bridge before I could get at the enemy.

"On the 7th, marched some twelve miles to Heights of Farmville, in pursuit, encountering the whole of Lee's force there at 1 o'clock, P.M.

"On the 8th, marched twenty-six miles, halting at midnight.

"On the 9th, by mid-day was up with Lee at Appomattox.

"By looking at Appendix L [xii. Scribner's Military Series], you will find the Second Corps, on the 31st March, had eighteen thousand five hundred and seven enlisted men of infantry present for duty equipped. Lost in action during the operations, about two thousand; straggled or fell out, between one and two thousand. [This makes the contrast much stronger against Burgoyne.] I see the number of guns is put down at seventy, four of which were mortars, and therefore were not taken with us on the march. We had therefore eleven batteries, or sixty-six guns. I do not recollect the number of wagons that belonged to the corps, and I could only get at it by diving into a great mass of papers. With the exception of the fighting trains, the trains followed us at some considerable distance.

"From Fredericksburg to Gettysburg [Third Corps] there were so many halts for two, three, or more days, that they can give no average per day.

"The Sixth Corps marched over thirty miles continuously, getting up to Gettysburg in the afternoon of the 2d July.*

"The Second Division, Third Corps, marched from Rappahannock River (part of it were covering railroad crossing of that river) evening of 14th June, 1863, and reached Manassas Junction night of 15th, a march of twenty-nine miles,—15th an excessively oppressive day.

"Again, on the 25th June, marched twenty-five miles to mouth of Monocacy, part of it in night under a heavy rain on the canal tow-path."

* Sedgwick says thirty miles.

rehashed and revamped by such writers as Bancroft, who, with great reputations, wrote history as lawyers draw up special pleas, and know nothing of war except the romantic or novelistic phases of it. If truthful history is to be written, it must be done under different lights, from different sources, and from other books than those which have been generally accepted in the United States as trustworthy stories of the Revolution, unless all such have been thoroughly sifted and compared. Burgoyne was unfit for his place, as was Howe, as Gage had been, as Clinton was to be. Carleton and Cornwallis never had a show. Washington and Schuyler were fit for their places.

Again, to go back, Burgoyne did not leave Skenesborough (White-hall) until the 23d July, nor Fort Edward until the 13th August. *Mark these dates!* This delay enabled Schuyler to block the route between Lake Champlain and the Hudson to the north and send Arnold to the relief of Fort Stanwix to the west, in extreme peril through the slaughterous defeat of Herkimer by Sir John Johnson, on the 6th August. Arnold's approach and the outrageous misconduct of the Indians compelled St. Leger to decamp at noon of the 22d August, while Burgoyne was still at Fort Miller, about ten miles below Fort Edward and three miles above Schuylerville, where he crossed the Hudson to his own "Caudine Forks."

Again, Schuyler was not superseded by Gates until the 19th August, while Burgoyne was still at Fort Miller, whence he sent his Germans to their destruction at Hoosic, or, as Stark himself styles it, Walloomscock,⁵ in a letter detailing the stealing of his horse by his own men,—not Bennington.

In the detachment of his Germans to their discomfiture at Hoosic, Burgoyne demonstrated how utterly unfit he was for the command he exercised, and also how entirely deficient he was equally in his estimate and comprehension of men. It was just exactly such a blunder as was

⁵ The loss of Stark's horse, while he was engaged in a reconnaissance on foot during the action, is recorded by Professor Butler, who publishes it as having found the advertisement in an old file of the *Hartford Courant*, of date October 7, 1777. It is as follows:

(From the *Connecticut Courant*, Tuesday, October 7, 1777.)

"TWENTY DOLLARS REWARD.

"STOLE from me the subscriber, from Walloomscock, in the time of action, the 16th of August last, a brown mare, five years old, had a star on her forehead. Also a doeskin seated saddle, blue housing trim'd with white, and a curbed bridle. It is earnestly requested that all committees of safety and others in authority, to exert themselves to recover said thief and mare, so that he may be brought to justice, and the mare brought to me; and the person, whoever he be, shall receive the above reward for both, and for the mare alone one-half of that sum. How scandalous, how disgraceful and ignominious must it appear to all friendly and generous souls to have such sly, artful, designing villains enter into the field in the time of action in order to pillage, pilfer, and plunder from their brethren when engaged in battle.

"JOHN STARK, B. D. G.

"BENNINGTON, 11th Sept., 1777."

made in the selection of the troops intended to profit by the explosion of the mine before Petersburg, in 1864.

There is no use of dilating upon that!

Recent revelations confirm the worst that was originally surmised or charged. If Burgoyne had undertaken to pick out, man by man, from those under arms, the most unequal to solve the problem he had in hand, he could not have blundered more fearfully nor more fatally to himself. Why did he not send Frazer, "the gallant General Frazer [who] was the directing soul of the British troops in action," with his elegant Light Infantry, than whom, at this time, there were none better in the world? nor could a better leader be found for the "Light Bobs" than the capable, experienced, and intrepid Frazer himself. Even as it was, in spite of all the stupidity manifested, the Americans, victorious over Baum, fell to plundering, as they afterwards did at Eutaw Springs, and at other places, and as the rebels did at Shiloh and at Cedar Creek, and on other occasions, and lost sight of the grand prize, victory. It was touch and go at Hoosic after all. Breyman came up, was winning back all that was lost, when in stepped Warner with his Continentals or regulars, New Yorkers as well as New Englanders, and the victory first won, then almost thrown away, became assured.

There is no benefit in following out this series of blunders, except to say that down to the 16th October Burgoyne's case was by no means desperate. Let his friends assert it as loudly and vehemently as they may or can, Gates was looking over his shoulder and casting wistful glances towards his bridge of boats and the rear, even after the success which Arnold, against his will and intention, won for him on the 7th October. It is all very well for those who wish to rehabilitate Gates with ink on paper,—be the inciting cause whatever it may,—he was one of the popular humbugs of the Revolution. He cooked and got his gruel at Camden. The "good and gallant" Cornwallis who settled his hash there would have done it just as handsomely at Saratoga, had the victim of Clinton, in Yorktown in 1781, been on the Hudson in 1777. Burgoyne was bad enough with his conceit and self-indulgence, but Sir William Howe was worse with his "imprudence" (Fonblanque, 223) and indolence, and Sir Henry Clinton with his nervousness, and he, again, and Vaughan with their perfunctory hesitations. Gordon tells the story as well as anybody who has attempted it, and he cannot be improved upon.

"We now enter upon the relation of the measures pursued by the British below Albany. You have been told what were the sentiments of General Putnam, on the 9th [October], as to their sailing up to within sixteen miles of the American camp, before removed from the neighborhood of Stillwater. Sir H. Clinton, however, instead of pushing up the river, intrusted the business to Sir James Wallace and General Vaughan. The latter had under him three thousand six hundred men. Sir James commanded a flying squadron of light frigates, accompanied with the necessary appendage of barges, batteaus, and boats for landing the troops, and all other

movements. By the 13th [October] they reached Kingston alias *Æsopus*, a fine village as you would call it; but on this side the Atlantic, a good town. Upon Vaughan's landing the troops, the Americans, being too weak to make resistance, abandoned their battery of three guns after spiking them. They left the town immediately for their own safety, without firing from the houses upon the British. Vaughan, however, was told that Burgoyne had actually surrendered; and the town was doomed to the flames. The whole was reduced to ashes, and not a house left standing. The American Governor Clinton was a *tame spectator* of the barbarity, but only for want of a sufficient force to attack the enemy. This seemingly revengeful devastation was productive of a *pathetic* but severe letter from General Gates (then in the height of victory) to General Vaughan. *The latter with a flood-tide might have reached Albany in four hours:* there was no force to have hindered him. When he burnt Livingston's Upper Mills [between Barrytown and Tivoli], had he proceeded to Albany and burnt the American stores, *Gates, as he himself has declared, must have retreated into New England.* The royalists may justly remark upon the occasion, 'Why a delay was made of seven days after Clinton had taken the forts we are ignorant of. The Highland forts were taken the 6th October; *Æsopus* was burnt the 13th; Burgoyne's convention was signed the 17th. There was no force to oppose even open boats on the river; why then did not the boats proceed immediately to Albany? Had Clinton gone forward, Burgoyne's army had been saved. Putnam could not have crossed to Albany. The army amused themselves with burning *Æsopus*, and the houses of individuals on the river's-bank.' While the British were manœuvring in and about the North River, doing mischief to individuals, without serving their own cause in the least, General Gates had express upon express, urging him to send down troops to oppose the enemy. On the 14th he wrote to Governor Clinton:—'I have ordered the commanding officer at Fort Schuyler to send Van Schaak's regiment without delay to Albany,—desired Brigadier-General Gransevoort to repair to that city, and take the command of all the troops that may assemble there,—and have sent down the two *Æsopus* regiments, the Tryon County militia, and most of the militia of Albany County.' But he would not weaken his hold of Burgoyne by any detachment of Continentals from his own army, or of New England militia. The New York State militia, that repaired to the governor to assist the inhabitants, did as much mischief as the enemy, the burning of houses and other buildings excepted. ~~It is~~ It is too much the case of all militia, that when they march to the assistance of their countrymen against a common enemy, they do the former a great deal of damage. The laxness of their discipline and their unreasonable claims of indulgences from those whom they are to protect, make them expensive and disagreeable guests."~~It is~~

In this connection it may be found interesting to insert the copy of a letter which the writer found among the papers of his grandfather, who was a captain in the New York Royal Volunteers, or King's Third American Regiment, which was the first to enter Fort Montgomery on the 6th of October, 1777, when Clinton started up the Hudson to demonstrate in favor of Burgoyne. As the writer has never seen it in print, it may prove valuable as well as interesting.

Indorsed: "Gen'l Putnam's Letter of Sept. 16, 1777, with accounts from the Southward.

"On public Service.
To His Excellency Gov'r Clinton,
at
Kingston,
by Express."

Countersigned on outside:

"ISRAEL PUTNAM."

"PEEKS KILL, Sept. 16, 1777.

"DEAR SIR,—

"Your Favour of 13th I have been duly honoured with; am greatly obliged to you for the assistance you have ordered from the militia. I will take particular care that they shall be Supplied with provision and Ammunition.

"The Enemy's numbers in and about Hackensack, by the best information I have been able to obtain, are between 4 and five thousand; part came from Staten Island, through Elizabeth Town & Newark toward sison [us on ?], and three or four thousand crossed from Spiten devil Creek to Fort Lee. I am well assured that they have lately received a reinforcement at N. York, and this is further Confirmed by a deserter who belongs to Col. Bradly's Regt., taken at Danbury after enlisted with the Enemy, & came from the bridge with the party that came to Fort Lee;—he says they told him ten thousand recruits were arrived at York;—that the party which came to fort Lee were not many of them from the bridge;—their numbers four or five thousand;—had deserted at Soubriskey's [Zabriskey's?] Mills, between Paramus and Hackensack, where they lay when he left them;—& had Collected many Cattle and horses.

"Col. Burr, I am informed, Surprised their Picquet last night, killed Sixteen, mortally wounded seven, and took the remainder.

"I have wrote to Connecticut for the militia of that State to be Speedily Sent down.

"Inclosed is a hand-bill containing an acc't of the action to the Southward, Since the receipt of which I have received a letter from Major Putnam, who was at Philadelphia, informing that Gen'l Washington, with his army, had retired this side the School kill, & meant to make a stand there. Gen'l How was busied ye 12th and 13th burying his Dead;—that we had about one thousand killed and wounded;—and it's believed the Enemy have lost double that number;—on the 13th the Enemy were filing off to the left to gain Sween's ford 15 miles above Philadelphia.—Gen'l Washington Sent a body of Troops to Oppose them. Assailants Generally have an infinite advantage over those who act only on the defensive;—it's my Opinion, & I think the Opinion is Supported by our own Experience, that we shall always be beat untill we learn or venture to attack.

"Gen'l Parsons, with his Brigade, & Col. Ludington, with his detachment from the militia, are at Whiteplains, where they are necessary and serve a double purpose,—to Cover that part of the Country from the ravages of the Enemy, & are as great or greater Security to this post lying between us and them than if they were at this post; they will git the first notice of the Enemy's Motions, & Can retire here or harrass them, as shall be Judged best. Col. Brinkerhoff has applied to me in behalf of his Reg't. I have Ordered the whole to hold themselves in readiness, —and one-third to come in at present.

"With particular respect and Esteem, I have the Hon'r to be your Excellency's Obed't humble Ser't.

"ISRAEL PUTNAM.

"HIS EXCELLENCY GOV'R CLINTON."

To use the words that Shakspeare puts into the mouth of "melancholy Jaques,"—

"Last scene of all,
That ends this strange, eventful history,
In second childishness,"

as to military comprehension of circumstances, contemplate Burgoyne holding "high festival" in the Schuyler mansion,—burned to the ground next morning,—at the junction of the outlet of Saratoga Lake, Fish Kill, and the Hudson, while his faithful subordinates and troops were

victims to the elements and the American round-shot and bullets. The deluges from the clouds were not more pitiless than the iron and leaden hail poured in by the encompassing enemy. With his sweetheart, Burgoyne was having a joyous time and wasting the hours, when the last chance of escape vouchsafed like a rift in the rack of the storm,—the brief interval of sunshine—was gradually closing up again to end on “the field of the grounded arms,” on the opposite shore, at the point which was the site of the old Fort Hardy. War in those days for the professional officer was not the grim reality that our poor fellows found it in the Rebellion and still recognize it on the Plains.

If Burgoyne was “Burgoyned” as was Stanhope at Brihuega, in 1710, or Dupont at Baylen, in 1808, or Pemberton at Vicksburg, in 1863, and the embryo of the independence of these United States ushered into being, and the Stars and Stripes, “Old Glory,” flung to the winds at Saratoga, the British general was “Burgoyned,” in 1777, on the one hand by his own faults and errors, and on the other by the prescience, constancy, patriotism, and capacity of Philip Schuyler.

“ And through the centuries let a people’s voice
In full acclaim,
A people’s voice,
Attest the great [New Yorker’s] claim,
With honor, honor, honor to him,
Eternal honor to his name!”

Hay



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 801 995 7

